



Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts

**APPLICATION OF FILM MUSIC HARMONIC TECHNIQUES BY  
JOE HISAISHI INTO INSTRUMENTAL POP MUSIC  
*INGIN KAU TAHU***

**LEE JIA CHENG**

**Bachelor of Applied Arts with Honours  
(Music)  
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UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

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**APPLICATION OF FILM MUSIC HARMONIC TECHNIQUES BY  
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*INGIN KAU TAHU*

LEE JIA CHENG

This project is submitted in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Applied Arts with Honors  
(Music)

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The project entitled **Application of Film Music Harmonic Techniques by Joe Hisaishi into Instrumental Pop Music *Ingin Kau Tahu*** was prepared by **Lee Jia Cheng** and submitted to the Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a **Bachelor of Applied Arts with Honors (Music)**.

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## EDITORIAL NOTES

To avoid any confusion on title of original soundtrack (OST) and title of film, all original soundtrack (OST) titles are italicised and enclosed in quotation marks, while all film titles are italicised. For example, “*The Girl Who Fell from the Sky*” from film *Castle in the Sky*.

For the symbols used to notate chord, chord symbols in the style of Sibelius 7.5 music software are used. The chord indicators are as follows:

- Major chord is written only with the tonic. For example C major chord will be written as C.
- Minor chord is written with the tonic and m. For example C minor chord will be written as Cm.
- Diminished chord is written with the tonic and °. For example C diminished chord will be written as C°.
- Seventh chord is written with the tonic and <sup>7</sup>. For example C major seventh chord will be written as C<sup>7</sup>.
- Suspended chord is written with the tonic and <sup>(sus)</sup>. For example C suspended fourth chord will be written as C<sup>(sus4)</sup>.
- Added tone chord is written with the tonic and <sup>add</sup>. For example C major added-sixth chord will be written as C<sup>add6</sup>.

- Quartal chord is written with the tonic and qtr. For example C quartal chord will be written as Cqtr.
- Extended chord is written with the tonic and the extended interval(s). For example C major thirteenth chord will be written as C<sup>13</sup>.
- Altered chord is written with the tonic and the altered interval(s). For example C major seventh minor ninth chord will be written as C<sup>7(b9)</sup>.

Chord symbol is used solitary for writing chords, while the key signature or tonality is written in full with the tonic and indication major or minor key For example C major key and A minor tonality.



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## Abstract

Researcher has always been fascinated by the way of composers, arrangers or musicians play around with chords and harmony to either change the mood of the song or the style of the music. Modern pop music is known to be exclusively diatonic in term of harmony, this has prompted the researcher to study and compose a new instrumental pop music to show that it is possible and acceptable to compose or arrange an instrumental pop music using not only diatonic and conventional harmony. This research focuses on the study of the harmonic techniques used by Joe Hisaishi in the film music he composed for Ghibli Studio's animation films. The research utilises exploration research method, where the researcher randomly selected six original soundtracks (OST) composed by Joe Hisaishi for six animation films that produced in between 1986 and 2001, ready to be studied. The primary data is collected through participant observation by identifying and obtaining the sampled OST then transcribed into music scores consisting melody and harmony. Content analysis is carried out according to the harmonic technique's function(s), movement of bass line and the respective section where the harmonic technique is used in order to synthesise the main harmonic techniques used by Joe Hisaishi which later used in the final composition. The harmonic techniques that being focused on are the quartal chord, the cliché harmony, change of tonality in different section and different final chord used in the OST. Researcher has successfully composed a new instrumental pop music named "*Ingin Kau Tahu*" using quartal chord to create tension, as well as cliché harmony to harmonise the main melody, change of tonality in alternating section and ending with an <sup>add6</sup>tonic chord.



## *Abstrak*

*Penyelidik terpesona dengan cara komposer, penggubah atau pemuzik bermain-main dengan kord dan harmoni sama ada menukar mood lagu atau gaya muzik. Muzik pop moden dikenali secara hanya menggunakan kord diatonik dari segi harmoni, ini telah mendorong penyelidik untuk mengkaji dan mencipta lagu pop instrumental baru untuk menunjukkan bahawa ia adalah boleh diterima untuk mengarang atau mencipta muzik pop instrumental dengan menggunakan bukan sahaja kord diatonik dan harmoni konvensional. Penyelidikan ini bertumpu kepada teknik-teknik harmoni yang digunakan oleh Joe Hisaishi dalam muzik filem yang dia mengarang untuk filem animasi Studio Ghibli. Penyelidikan menggunakan kaedah penyelidikan penerokaan di mana penyelidik memilih enam soundtrack asal (OST) yang dikarang oleh Joe Hisaishi antara tahun 1986 dan 2001 secara rawak untuk dikaji. Data utama dikumpul melalui pemerhatian turut serta dengan prosedur mengenal pasti dan memperoleh sampel OST kemudian ditranskripsikan ke dalam bentuk skor muzik yang terdiri daripada melodi dan harmoni. Kaedah analisis kandungan dijalankan mengikut fungsi, pergerakan bass line dan bahagian masing-masing di mana teknik harmoni tersebut digunakan untuk menunjukkan teknik harmoni kegemaran Joe Hisaishi dalam muzik filem beliau. Empat teknik harmoni telah disintesis dan dikaji serta digunakan untuk mencipta muzik pop instrumental baru. Teknik harmoni yang difokuskan ialah kord kuartal, harmoni klise, perubahan tonality antara bahagian yang berbeda dan kord terakhir yang berlainan diguna dalam OST. Penyelidik telah berjaya mencipta sebuah muzik pop instrumental baru yang dinamakan "Ingin Kau Tahu" dengan menggunakan kord kuartal untuk mewujudkan ketegangan, harmoni klise untuk mengharmonikan melodi utama, perubahan tonality dalam bahagian selingan dan berakhir dengan kord tonik add6.*

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of Study**

In Malaysia, jazz music is hindered from being explored widely and developed further because of the cultural politics and the close relation of ethnic backgrounds, religions and social status of the people (Jähnichen, 2010). This directly affects new generations' thought towards jazz music and results in the poor participation from them in jazz education, Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) exams and jazz events (Chan, 2013). Furthermore, it leads to a lack of attention on harmony handling techniques that is not contemporary at the time by young musicians. Now that the top of the billboard is filled with contemporary pop music with its harmonic area hardly went dissonant, young musicians tend to overlook the possibility of using unpopular harmonic techniques and chord progressions in their compositions and arrangements. As a result, there is a limitation of creativity and that is unforgivable for any artist who lives by composing.

By studying how a modern composer use unique harmonic techniques is a method to expand students' harmony territory and also a good way begin the journey of exploring the possibilities of harmony in all kind of music. The researcher has a genuine wish to encourage Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) music undergraduates to learn and use more different harmonic techniques and to discover more possibilities in composing. This research provides the researcher a platform to study and compose using harmonic techniques by analysing Joe Hisaishi's film music. At the end of the research, the researcher composed

an instrumental pop music, using the harmonic techniques found in Joe Hisaishi's film music for Studio Ghibli's animation film production and performed in the CIPTA Concert 2018 in UNIMAS.

## **1.2 Research Scope**

The focus of the research is the harmonic techniques used by Joe Hisaishi in his film music compositions. The analysing subject is scoped to the original soundtrack (OST) composed by Joe Hisaishi for Studio Ghibli's animation films from 1986 to 2001.

## **1.3 Problem Statement**

It has been a trend that the modern pop music is known to be exclusively diatonic (Blendell, 2015). This prompted young musicians less likely to compose using unpopular harmony and chord progression. Without advance education on 20<sup>th</sup> century harmony, the young musicians tend to use most functional chords or diatonic chords when composing and arranging (Chan, personal communication, January 22, 2018). Harmony like the quartal chord and extended chords which sound dissonant to the modern ears are more difficult to use in harmonising melody.

## **1.4 Research Objectives**

- 1.4.1 To analyse the harmonic techniques used by Joe Hisaishi in his film music compositions.
- 1.4.2 To compose an instrumental pop music by using Joe Hisaishi's harmonic techniques.
- 1.4.3 To justify the effectiveness of the use of harmonic techniques by Joe Hisaishi in instrumental pop music.

## **1.5 Research Hypothesis**

The use of harmonic techniques from film music by Joe Hisaishi into instrumental pop music is predicted to be accepted by majority of the public respondents.

## **1.6 Importance of Research**

This research is an attempt to prove that it is possible and acceptable to compose or arrange an instrumental pop music other than contemporary harmonic techniques.

## 1.7 Literature Review

Leonard Bernstein once said during his educational concert, The Young's People Concert, music is sound and pitches that are purposely arranged according to a plan by a composer. The sound and pitches are meant to be the melody arranged horizontally against time and the harmony arranged vertically along the time. Different harmonic techniques and chord progressions are used from era to era. Harmony becomes the decisive music element and is a preference to the composers and listeners (Chan, personal communication, January 24, 2018; Yasser, 1937). From Middle Age, to the great Johann Sebastian Bach, to Mozart, Chopin, Arnold Schoenberg, Mile Davis and Joe Hisaishi, every composer's style of writing harmony may represent their time.

Mamoru Fujisawa, professionally known as Joe Hisaishi, started his music life at young age. He devoted his composing life into animation film industry and his first success dated back to 1974 with an anime series called *Gyatoruzu*. Partnering with the animation film director and producer of *My Neighbour Totoro*, *Princess Mononoke* and *Spirited Away*, the legendary Miyazaki Hayao, Joe Hisaishi is now one of the most successful film music composers in the world and is often compared to John Williams in film music industry. Both Miyazaki Hayao and Joe Hisaishi directed the film and music respectively in Studio Ghibli and they gave it the golden period since the 1990's. Table 1 shows the animation films produced by Studio Ghibli from 1986 to 2001 with its respectively director, screenwriter(s), producer(s) and music director.

Year	Title	Director	Screenwriter(s)	Producer(s)	Music Director
1986	<i>Castle in the Sky</i>	Hayao Miyazaki		Isao Takahata	Joe Hisaishi
1988	<i>Grave of the Fireflies</i>	Isao Takahata		Toru Hara	Michio Mamiya
	<i>My Neighbor Totoro</i>	Hayao Miyazaki			Joe Hisaishi
1989	<i>Kiki's Delivery Service</i>			Hayao Miyazaki	
1991	<i>Only Yesterday</i>	Isao Takahata		Toshio Suzuki	Katz Hoshi
1992	<i>Porco Rosso</i>	Hayao Miyazaki			Joe Hisaishi
1994	<i>Pom Poko</i>	Isao Takahata			Shang Shang Typhoon
1995	<i>Whisper of the Heart</i>	Yoshifumi Kondō	Hayao Miyazaki		Yuji Nomi
1997	<i>Princess Mononoke</i>	Hayao Miyazaki			Joe Hisaishi
1999	<i>My Neighbors the Yamadas</i>	Isao Takahata			Akiko Yano
2001	<i>Spirited Away</i>	Hayao Miyazaki			Joe Hisaishi

Table 1: Animation film produced by Studio Ghibli from 1986 to 2001 (adapted from “List of Studio Ghibli works,” [n.d.]).

Joe Hisaishi being one of the most influential modern composers today, his harmonic techniques to express the emotion from Miyazaki Hayao’s animation film is studied and discussed globally. Numerous researches have been done by scholars studying the relationship between the harmonic techniques he used to express the film and characterise each character in the film. Excluding the expression of emotion from the film, most people are discussing about the way Joe Hisaishi uses the quartal chord.

Since the beginning of music in Middle Ages, the word harmony has begun to surface with the Gregorian Chant. Yasser (1937) stated that the harmonic principle of the Gregorian Chant has completely discarded for centuries as the preference of harmony

changed from quartal, interval of fourth to tertian, interval of thirds regardless major or minor. In tertian harmony, a thirds is taken as the smallest consonant unit and the superposition of two thirds in major and minor or minor and major produces a consonant interval of fifth and therefore the the three notes chord is called a triad or a stacked thirds, quartal chord on the other hand take a fourths as the smallest consonant unit and the superposition of two fourths creates a dissonant seventh thus the quartal chord or the stacked fourth (Yasser, 1937, 1938). Although it is not often heard in contemporary music or pop music industry, quartal chord or quartal harmony is not a new music theory in the music history, in fact it was used even before the famous Johann Pachelbel's *Canon in D* in 1680s which uses only eight diatonic triad chords and the Father of Harmony and Master of Counterpoint, Johann Sebastian Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier* in which begin the use of standard temperament tuning and preference of thirds over fourths.

According to Yasser (1937), it is from the medieval composers that consider the fourths, fifths and octaves as consonances while thirds, sixths and sevenths are dissonances and there can be little doubt that a composer sees thirds and sixths as dissonances, writes a melodic differently from one for whom that sees these intervals as consonances. It is also been proven that the quartal harmony is fundamentally linked to the pentatonic scale (Yasser, 1937). Szabolcsi (1943) stated that the pentatonic scale can trace as far back as Gregorian chant and this opinion is widely held and was accepted by Takatoma Kurosawa in 1952 (as cited in A. A. B., 1954).

A great number of trichordal motive were found within a perfect fourth by Yasser (as cited by A. H. F. S., 1939). The pentatonic scale consists of five notes within an octave which can be constructed by two disjunct trichords at a pitch a fifth higher forming

major pentatonic and fifth lower forming minor pentatonic, as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 (Belaiev, 1963). Besides, there are four trichords within interval of perfect fourth can be form in a pentatonic scale, notice that the third note is always a perfect fourth from the first note in the bracket shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4.



Figure 1: Two disjunct trichords at a fifth higher forming C major pentatonic.  
Adapted from “The Formation of Folk Modal Systems” by V. Belaiev, 1963,  
*Journal of the International Folk Music Council*, 15, p. 5.



Figure 2: Two disjunct trichords at a fifth lower forming C minor pentatonic.  
Adapted from “The Formation of Folk Modal Systems” by V. Belaiev, 1963,  
*Journal of the International Folk Music Council*, 15, p. 5.

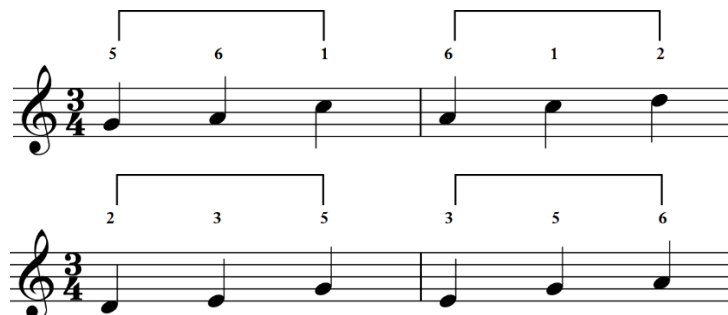


Figure 3: Four trichords in C major pentatonic.